



The World of Art Nouveau

a cura di Andrea Speziali





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Traduzioni di
Endrit Kokale e Francesca Zagone



Progetto di ITALIA LIBERTY

Giuria del premio internazionale
"Italian Liberty" con le categorie
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DISCOVERY LIBERTY. VILLA GABRIELLI IN FRASCATI

Andrea Speziali

At the beginning it was the collector Andrea Dorlinguzzo, author of the site "Roma Ieri Oggi" to find in an old envelope twenty negative roll of 1911 realised by the Roman photographer Jacobelli. The beauty of the images of the various villino-s, among the Liberty and Eclecticism style, inspired the collector to be in contact with the institution "Italia Liberty" to know the position of the anonymous villino. The committee of study Italia Liberty immediately cared about the issue spreading online the images to acquire as much useful data as possible. Initially there was the idea it could be in Rome in Vatican avenue because of the presence of a 20th century villino there. Therefore, we would have been in front of a sensational finding. However, it is well-known that Liberty style in the eternal city did not have the same success of other Italian cities as Milan, Turin, Trieste and regions like Emilia-Romagna and Sicily. Silvia Savoretti and Luca Barduccio, researchers of heraldic coats of arms, contextually manage to identify from the photos that the coats of arms on the wall of the villa represented two powerful families of that time. A coat of arms belonged to the count of Camerino Giuseppe Parisani (1823 -1887), the other one of his wife Princess Emilia Gabrielli (1849 -1911) daughter of the niece of Napoleone Bonaparte. Both of them are parents of the painter Napoleone Parisani (1854 -1932) cousin of the photographer Giuseppe Primoli. In the genealogical tree of the villa there is also the Prince Placido Gabrielli (dead in Frascati in 1911), nephew of Luciano Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon. His appreciation for Art Nouveau could be connected to his long stay in France, so that to favor the construction of the villa, which may be dated in 1908 -1910.

Considering the photos of Jacobelli, we can notice that the building overlooks two different fronts: one that looks on an incline road and the other one on an ampler and level space. So, there was the certainty that it was a zone of the Lungotevere, particularly in Palace Primoli and alley of the Marchegiani, an area where numerous demolitions were effected in 1909. After a month from the divulgation of the images, the association Amici di Frascati, through Massimo De Sanctis, communicated to *Roma ieri Oggi* and *Italia Liberty* that the villino was in Frascati.

It was enough to observe some panoramic postcard of the city to individuate the villa, situated above the railway station that confined to Duca D'Aosta street and Prince Amedeo and it was known, initially, as Villa Piacentini, then Gabrielli and finally Sciarra.

I have immediately contacted the owner of the Hotel Cacciani that fortunately remembered the villa, where today there is his restaurant. Unfortunately today the villa does not exist anymore, it was probably bombed the 8 September of 1943 or the 2 January of 1944.

At its place today there is also a 60's building, but nothing to do with the Art Nouveau beauty of the native villino. Reconstructing the history from the postcards and from the oral testimonies we deduce that after the bombing the villa had been abandoned, subsequently the debris had been removed to make space for a open-space cinema. But the history could not finish here. Thus, as researcher of Liberty art, I started to discover the author of this authentic Italian Art Nouveau jewel.

The Ministry of the Cultural Goods and the Historical Archives of the Commune of Frascati did not find documents about it, but just the remembrance of the villa in the memory of the public employees. The bombing had been so dramatic that, besides destroying precious monuments, deleted big part of the sources. Studying the architecture of the period in the area of the region Lazio and its architects, I have found the signature of the known architect Cesare Bazzani.

The stylistic figure expressed in the Villa Gabrielli shares its perfect affinity with his other works from the similar style, for instance Villa Giulio Rossi in Terni. The play of the pillars to the four angles of the house, which conclude above the roof with a decorated vase, is one of the analogies that approve my theory. Around the study of the frescos of Villa Parisani Gabrielli Sciarra, I am certain it is about the work of the maestro Paolo Antonio Paschetto (as well as author of the logo of the Italian Republic) and known decorator of that time. The architecture of the villa is an example of the Florentine influence through the work of the architect Michelazzi and a Parisian impact in comparison with the undulated form that crosses the two sides of the villa.



The appointment to the Bazzani (1873 -1939) denotes a particular care of the commission: the obtainment of a value result of the villa. Cesare Bazzani attended the "Scuola di Applicazione" of Rome and he won the contest for "Pensionato artistico internazionale" with the project of a cathedral in Italian Gothic style. In 1905 he won the contest for the façade of San Lorenzo in Florence and in the same period organized a show in his studio of In Arcioni street, exposing works as the project of the villa at issue, together to other projects of small constructions among which the one of "Canottieri Aniene" circle to the walk of Ripetta that reveals a certain interest and stamped by Giovannoni for some "evident concessions to the Liberty fashion." His first professional works are related to a church in Treia (Macerata), a villino in Taranto and a villa in Terni. Through those twenty snapshots of Jacobelli, the history of a day can be reconstructed between Frascati and Rome together with Cesare Bazzani: they therefore return us Villa Cagiati in Dei Gracchi street, Villa Astengo on the Lungotevere de' Cenci, Villa Titta Ruffo situated in Carlo Dolci street, Republic square, Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati and other unknown villino-s, for example, one photographed in phase of construction and a frieze in chalk to assemble for the 1911 Universal Exposition pavilions. It is reasonable that in the envelope there were more negative rolls than the recovered ones; the photographed man wearing an oarsman uniform is probably Bazzani and the house along the Tevere is probably the same circle of the Oarsmen. This hypothesis can be ascertained comparing the portrait of Bazzani with the photographed man. The biography of Bazzani highlights the architectural work located along the Adriatic sea. We are talking about the

Villino Matricardi in Grottammare realised in 1913 after the Villino of Frascati. It can be possible that the Matricardi, another powerful family of the epoch, felt in love with the works of Bazzani up to commission him a villino for the summer in a bathing zone of the region Marche. Also in the Villino of Grottammare, characterised by a turret, we can see Liberty frescos with nature theme. In 1906, Bazzani participated in the contest for the national Library in Florence succeeding on being noticed; two years later he took on and also won the contest for the Building of the Belle Arti (inaugurated in 1911) which subsequently became the Gallery of Modern Art in Rome. These two successes were decisive for his fame: in the projects it is fully expressed his strong and authoritarian personality, distant from ideological worries and from critical refinements, but perfectly appropriate to the official culture of the time. The history of this villa is the exceptional testimony of a Liberty abode as the most prestigious of Rome and surroundings, both for the history of the family which built it, for the fame of the architect and the prestige of its decorator and also for the stylistic part which considers a planning with a rigorous respect of the Liberty style. An abode that is similar to the prestige and beauty of the Villino Ruggeri in Pesaro, until today the maximum expression of the Liberty art in the Italian architecture. According to Cecilia Casadei, art expert and critical journalist, already president of the Contest Photographic Italian Liberty, the debate and the interest that are raising around the recovery of the Roman villino, demonstrates that the art is an essential aspect of the human experience and the enjoyment of the beauty is a vital aesthetical necessity, promoted and cultivated by the action of Italy Liberty.



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